

Agency: Department of Education and Early Development**Project Title:****Project Type:** Other

Stratton Library Acquisition

State Funding Requested: \$2,500,000**House District:** Statewide (1-40)

One-Time Need

Brief Project Description:

Funding is \$2.5 million for the purchase of Stratton Library to expand and preserve the collections of the State of Alaska's Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka.

Funding Plan:**Total Cost of Project:** \$2,500,000*There is no other funding needed***Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

Funding is \$2.5 million for the purchase of Stratton Library to expand and preserve the collections of the State of Alaska's Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka.

In 2007, Sheldon Jackson College, Alaska's oldest institution of higher education closed its doors. Stratton Library served as college's academic and research center. The 11,400 square foot library is an important community building, and has often hosted researchers and authors such as James Michener. With the school's closure, the college trustees have worked to transfer buildings on the core campus to organizations that would use the facilities in a manner consistent with the education and cultural mission of the college. In this reorganization, the state has a rare opportunity to acquire the college's library for consolidation with the adjacent state-owned museum.

Located next to Stratton Library, the Sheldon Jackson Museum is the oldest museum in Alaska. The museum was founded to house the collections of Alaska Native cultural material gathered by Presbyterian missionary Sheldon Jackson. The collections have often been called a crown jewel of Alaska's historical archives, and rival the Smithsonian Institute in its breadth of Alaska ethnographic artifacts. In 1985, the state purchased the museum with a signed agreement that the collection would remain in Sitka.

The Sheldon Jackson Museum is a community icon and popular visitor attraction, but is in desperate need of additional space and facilities. The building is as old as some of the items in its collection. The museum administers a collection of 6,000 objects, vastly outstripping the capacity of the museum's small, unique structure. The facility was the first concrete building in the state, opening in 1897, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There is a pressing need for renovations and expansion to properly preserve the museum's collections. The museum currently leases space in Stratton Library to store overflow of its collections that don't fit in the museum's facility.

Acquiring the library will allow the department to enhance a valuable state museum property and preserve world-class historical collections. This project is strongly supported by Sheldon Jackson Trustees and the Sitka community.

Project Timeline:

FY 2011

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

State Department of Education & Early Development - Division of Libraries, Archives, & Museums

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

Name: Bob Banghart, Chief Curator
Address: P.O. Box 110500
Juneau, AK 99811
Phone Number: (907)465-4819
Email: bob.banghart@alaska.gov

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? ☒ Yes ☐ No



April 30, 2010

State of Alaska
Office of the Governor
PO BOX 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell:

I am writing to urge the acquisition of the College's Stratton Library for the benefit of the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka.

The state-owned Sheldon Jackson Museum sits inside the College campus, adjacent to the Stratton Library. In recent years and administrations there have been discussions between the Museum and College regarding the purchase or use of the Stratton Library to expand the capacity and programming abilities of the Museum. Today the Museum is renting some space in the building.

As you know, Sheldon Jackson College, with a 129 year record of distinguished service to Alaska Natives and rural Alaska, suspended academic operations in July 2007 due to an unserviceable debt load and then laid off 120 employees. Since then the board's strategy and purpose has been to market sufficient real estate to satisfy the College's creditors and to convey the core campus to an entity that would use it for educational, cultural, and research purposes consistent with the mission of Sheldon Jackson College. We are now in serious discussions with the University of Dubuque (Iowa) that we hope will result in Dubuque's assuming ownership of the campus and bringing their vibrant educational enterprise to Sitka and Southeast Alaska. The University of Dubuque has many ties to Southeast Alaska, counting Rev. Henry Fawcett of Metlakatla and Rev. Walter Soboleff of Juneau among its graduates. The University is widely known for its mission of providing quality education to first-generation and under-served populations within a vibrant, economically sustainable institution.

One requirement for this relationship to mature is that the core campus be conveyed unencumbered. We are working a definite plan for property sales and debt retirement, and the sale of the Stratton Library is a significant step toward achieving that goal.

Bob Banghart, newly appointed chief curator of the Alaska State Museum, is well aware of the potential offered by the Stratton Museum to the Sheldon Jackson Museum's programming. We have had preliminary conversations to continue and further the discussion of acquiring the Stratton.

Senator Stedman has encouraged our efforts and we have been in close conversation with his office.

The City and Borough of Sitka and the Sitka Economic Development Association (SEDA) have joined the College in discussions with the University of Dubuque, recognizing that higher education was and is an economic driver and cultural stimulus for the community, and are collaborating with the College to bring the University of Dubuque to Sitka. We recently made a joint visit to Dubuque and a press release from the University is attached.

If there is any other information that you would find helpful I would be pleased to provide it. We would welcome an opportunity to visit with you to further discuss this opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration of this request which would benefit the Sheldon Jackson Museum, would serve people of our region by providing quality higher education, and would be an economic and cultural resource to the community of Sitka.

A blessed Eastertide to you,



David Dobler
President

Cc: Senator Stedman
Representative Wilson



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NOV 25 2009

SITKA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

329 Harbor Drive, Suite 212 • Sitka, Alaska 99835 • (907) 747-2660 • fax (907) 747-7688 • www.sitka.net

November 23, 2009

Governor Sean Parnell
State of Alaska
PO BOX 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell:

The closure of Sheldon Jackson College (SJC) in 2007 has created both challenges and opportunities for Sitka. The SJC Stratton Library is currently for sale and should be viewed as an opportunity. The Sitka Economic Development Association requests that the State of Alaska purchase Stratton Library for the benefit of the state-owned Sheldon Jackson Museum.

Sheldon Jackson Museum displays a significant collection of Alaskan Native and historical artifacts, however, a vast collection of artifacts and important documents are not available to the public due to a lack of space. Purchase of the Stratton Library, which is adjacent to the SJ Museum, would provide space for expansion of the Museum's collection and programs. The chief curator of the Alaska State Museum, Bob Banghart, has shown interest in pursuing this opportunity to purchase the Stratton Library and recognizes the potential benefits of expanding space for Sheldon Jackson Museum.

The purchase of Stratton Library should be completed as soon as possible in order to provide the greatest benefit to our community. Negotiations with the University of Dubuque (Iowa) to take over SJC are ongoing and look promising. However, the core campus must be debt free before the property can be conveyed. Sale of the Library building will retire a significant portion of the debt and move negotiations forward, toward the goal of establishing a new educational enterprise in Sitka.

The take-over of SJC by the University of Dubuque will create an additional resource for higher education and research in the region and provide good jobs. The expansion of Sheldon Jackson Museum will create a dynamic center for educators and students to learn about Alaskan history, and provide an additional attraction for tourists that bring revenues to the community and support our economy.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Garry A. White, Executive Director

CC:

Karen Rehfeld, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Larry Ledoux, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Education
Linda Thibodeau, Director, Libraries, Archives and Museums
Bob Banghart, Chief Curator, Alaska State Museums
Bert Stedman, Alaska State Senator
Peggy Wilson, Alaska State Representative

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JAN 27 2010



Sitka Historical Museum

Sitka Historical Society

330 Harbor Drive Sitka, Alaska 99835
Voice: 907 747 6455 Fax: 907 747 6588

Bob Medinger, Executive Director
<http://www.sitkahistory.org>

Board of Directors

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John Stein
Jim Case
Chris Todd

January 19th, 2010

Governor Sean Parnell
State of Alaska
PO BOX 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell:

The Sitka Historical Society and Board, fully supports the purchase of the Sheldon Jackson Stratton Library for the benefit of the state-owned Sheldon Jackson Museum, and protection and promotion of the history of Sitka.

The Sheldon Jackson Museum displays a significant collection of Alaskan Native and historical artifacts, however, a vast collection of artifacts and important documents are not available to the public due to a lack of space and/or the continual outflow of items to other repositories or storage facilities. Purchase of the Stratton Library, which is adjacent to the SJ Museum, would provide space for expansion of the Museum's collection capabilities and programs.

A Consortium of eight organizations in Sitka has been working for several years in an attempt to find a solution to their own space and repository needs for historical artifacts, documents, and programs. This group is very aware of the great need at the state level, and specifically the need for the Sheldon Jackson Museum itself.

In addition, the potential take-over of SJ Campus by the University of Dubuque will create an additional resource for higher education and research in the region and provide employment opportunities. The expansion of Sheldon Jackson Museum will create a dynamic center for educators and students to learn about Alaskan history, and provide an additional attraction for tourists that bring revenues to the community and support our economy.

The Sitka Historical Society and Museum also offers the project our own professional collaboration and technical support in whatever capacity is desired.

Sincerely,

Bob Medinger, Executive Director

CC:

Karen Rehfeld, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Larry Ledoux, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Education
Linda Thibodeau, Director, Libraries, Archives and Museums
Bob Banghart, Chief Curator, Alaska State Museums
Bert Stedman, Alaska State Senator
Peggy Wilson, Alaska State Representative
City and Borough of Sitka
Sitka Historic Preservation Commission

Subject Photographs



Subject property viewing east



Subject property viewing north



Front and side elevations of the Stratton Library



Side elevations and front entry to the Stratton Library



Rear and side elevations and entry to the mezzanine level



Loading dock



Interior view



Interior view



Interior view



Mezzanine level



Boiler plant



Lincoln Street viewing west



Lincoln Street viewing east



Access drive viewing northeast from the intersection with Lincoln Street